

PUBLIC VALUE PARTNERSHIPS

The Three Rs at work in Montana

Public Value Partnership grants between Montana nonprofit arts organizations and the Montana Arts Council champion the fact that the arts are of benefit to all the citizens of Montana and are worthy of state and federal investment.

Public Value Partnerships utilize three tools we call “The Three Rs” to expand the public value of the work being done by Montana’s non-profit arts organizations:

- Building relationships;
- Creating greater relevance and meaning; and
- Establishing return on investment (measured both as economic vitality and impact on people’s lives).

MAC believes that using “The Three Rs” strengthens participation, understanding and support from audiences, donors and funders. We’d like to share some of the best examples of these stories with you from 2013:

Building Relationships

MCT, Inc., Missoula: What we did: We created a beautiful scrapbook for a major donor by scanning photographs and thank-you letters. The letters are from Montana youth who were in the cast of one of MCT’s touring

children’s musicals, and the photographs feature kids rehearsing or acting on stage in their costumes. The letters and photos come from at least 20 communities throughout Montana.

We designed the book in-house and included a personal message to the donor from Michael McGill (the company’s executive director). We sent all the materials to a company that specializes in keepsake books, and the finished product is professionally printed (in color) and bound. We added plastic sleeves to the book in order to include more than you letters/photos. The donor loves the book and has shown it to many friends/colleagues.

What we learned: We learned that donors want to showcase their work with MCT and that giving them an appealing scrapbook they can easily share with others is a catalyst for sparking conversations about MCT and the importance of the arts in Montana. We also learned that a book of photos and stories can be more powerful than posting the same materials online.

Creating Relevance

ArtMobile of Montana, statewide: This past year we worked to connect Montana people through their artworks, relevant to our theme: Montana’s Cultures. Our selection of

art and lessons reflected the theme, in a wide variety of topics that the artworks addressed. Jack Gladstone, well-known Blackfeet singer and poet, presented at three of the schools: Charlo, Dixon, and Arlee.

We showed 38 works of art this year, including: three stitched fabric pieces by the Hmong peoples; a model of a Metis Indian wooden cart, shown and loaned by Metis Al Wiseman, an expert on the Old North Trail where the carts were used to transport buffalo hides; 15 works by Native American artists; a photo of Hutterite Elder Sam Hofer by Kurt Keller; several abstract works; a work by Dana Boussard that relates to hate crimes and was part of the installation, “Speaking Volumes: Transforming Hate”; a photograph of the Milky Way by Jeff Van Tine that shows the lights of Helena and Bozeman in the distance, and emphasizes the Dark Sky issues; an assortment of paintings that relate to Montana; a drawing by Susann Lavold; two ceramic works; a glass sculpture; and two handmade

books by Connie Landis of MSU Billings.

Our art lessons hinged from the artworks in our exhibit. Examples include:

- Five schools created group abstract murals in response to Van Tine’s digital time-lapse photograph of the Milky Way.
- From Frank Finley’s “Antelope” and “Traveling Painting” – images of pictographs and petroglyphs – teaching artist and ArtMobile board member Bob Worthy helped students develop draw or paint a representation of themselves interacting with a helpful spirit.
- Students created their own versions of some of the artworks, such as “Red Summer Lodge” by Allen Knows His Gun.

Return on Investment

Fort Peck Fine Arts Council, Fort Peck:

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans is a faith-based, not-for-profit membership organization whose mission is to help members be wise with money and inspire them to live generous lives. Through their chapters and other resources, members reach out and strengthen Christian communities and congregations that they care about, across the nation. One way they do this is to host social events to bring members together to have fun and to support activities they value.

The Glasgow chapter serves much of northeastern Montana and has chosen to be a sponsor of the Fort Peck Summer Theatre for the past two seasons. Sponsorship means that in exchange for a \$1,500 gift to the theatre the



The ArtMobile’s 2012-13 artist, Frank Finley of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, shows his bandolier, a wearable work of art that symbolizes the old ammunition belts, to an Arlee student.

organization receives 50 tickets to be used for any show and 50 tickets to be used for a night of their choice called their sponsor night.

In 2013 Thrivent chose to sponsor a Sunday afternoon performance of “Music Man.” They planned a social event in Fort Peck that included recommended sites of the area, a ticket to the theatre, and a pulled-pork dinner with all the trimmings, provided by the Fort Peck Lutheran Church community.

For hosting the dinner the local Thrivent Chapter gave the church \$250, which was matched by the corporate office bringing \$500 into this small community church, plus the \$1,864 given through a free-will offering. The money raised this one day is enough to keep this small church open for the year and according to the church secretary, they hope to make it an annual event.

Over 200 people attended the theatre that day as guests of Thrivent. They came from Plentywood, Richie, Scobey, Wolf Point, Hinsdale, Culbertson, Circle, Opheim and Glasgow, with 50 arriving on a charter bus from Sidney. In addition to their sponsor tickets, Thrivent purchased 100 additional tickets for the performance that day.

The Fort Peck Fine Arts Council is proud to be an organization that many communities in a large geographic area not only value, but support through their long-distance participation and generous gifts. Furthermore the council is pleased to be part of a larger network of organizations such as Thrivent Financial whereby working together we can improve the quality of life for all.



Quinn Vaira and Andy Meyers starred in last summer’s production of “The Music Man” at the Fort Peck Summer Theatre.



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Montana organizations receive Big Read grants

The NEA and Arts Midwest recently announced that 77 nonprofit organizations will receive grants totaling more than \$1 million to host a Big Read project between September 2014 and June 2015.

Montana’s three recipients, and the books they will focus on, include:

- Billings Family YMCA (The Writer’s Voice): \$15,000 for *My Ántonia* by Willa Cather;
- Lewis and Clark Library, Helena: \$16,000 for *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain; and
- Missoula Public Library, \$17,000 for *The Things They Carried* by Tim O’Brien.

For details, visit neabigread.org.

NEA awards grants to six Montana organizations

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) recently awarded \$74.85 million in 971 grants to nonprofit organizations nationwide as part of the second half of its fiscal year 2014 funding.

In addition to direct grants through the Art Works category, this round of funding also supports the state arts agencies and regional arts organizations – the NEA’s partners in bringing the arts to all parts of the nation. Montana organizations received six grants, totaling \$877,200. Among the recipients:

- **Billings Family YMCA Inc. (aka YMCA Writer’s Voice):** \$10,000 to support Border Crossings, a series of free public readings and discussions featuring contemporary Canadian authors, representing a variety of literary genres and cultural backgrounds, including Metis, Mennonite, and French-Canadian. They also will attend the 12th annual High Plains BookFest.
- **Mainstreet Uptown Butte, Inc.:** \$25,000 to support the 2014 Montana Folk Festival. Artists from across the nation will present traditional music, dance, crafts and food. The festival also includes an area

dedicated to Native American traditions, as well as workshops led by traditional folklore specialists.

- **Art Mobile of Montana in Dillon:** \$20,000 to support a traveling exhibition and visual arts education program. A specially equipped van travels throughout the state, providing access to original artworks by Montana artists. Art-making activities are offered in a range of media and are accompanied by presentations from the artists, art lessons, and resources for teachers in selected K-12 schools in rural Montana.

- **MCT, Inc. (aka Missoula Children’s Theatre):** \$30,000 for the national performing arts residency tour to underserved communities and U.S. military bases. Touring actors and directors cast local youth in original musicals and rehearse and perform within a week.

- **Missoula Writing Collaborative:** \$35,000 to support Our Words, creative writing residencies for students on the Flathead Indian Reservation. Led by professional writers, playwrights and classroom teachers, each residency will incorporate either ekphrastic

writing (poetry inspired by a work of art) – with students writing in response to the work of local Salish artists – or scriptwriting, with students creating short theater productions based on Native American stories in collaboration with Native American playwrights. Students will present their work in English and Salish and have the opportunity to share their work between schools via Skype exchanges. Their work will also be disseminated through a published anthology, readings, and broadcast on the local public television station.

- **Montana Arts Council:** \$757,200 to support State Partnership Agreement activities. Forty percent of the NEA’s grantmaking funds are designated for state arts agencies, regional arts organizations, and national service organizations that support the work of the states and regions. Each state and regional arts organization must match its NEA funding at least 1:1, to provide funding at the local level.

For more information, visit arts.gov.